

Message Text

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11

ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 NEA-10 ISO-00 NIC-01 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07

H-03 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-07 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01

SPC-03 SS-20 USIA-15 OMB-01 DRC-01 EB-11 FEA-02

COME-00 TRSE-00 /126 W

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R 161017Z MAR 74

FM AMEMBASSY CAIRO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5734

INFO AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

C O N F I D E N T I A L CAIRO 1307

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR EG UR

SUBJECT: TASS CORRESPONDENT'S VIEWS ON ME ISSUES

1. DURING MARCH 14 CONVERSATION WITH EMBOFF, DEPUTY TASS
DIRECTOR YEDRASHNIKOV COMMENTED ON FOLLOWING SUBJECTS:

A. GROMYKO VISIT TO EGYPT. YEDRASHNIKOV CLAIMED LITTLE
KNOWLEDGE OF THE VISIT BUT STATED THAT COMMUNIQUE--WHICH,
HE SIAD, WAS NOT PUBLISHED IN FULL IN MOSCOW PRESS--WAS
LITTLE MORE THAN EMPTY WORDS AND WAS, THEREFORE, UNIMPORTANT.
LITTLE WAS RESOLVED DURING GROMYKO'S VISIT, INCLUDING QUESTION
OF EGYPTIAN DEBT TO USSR AND AGREEMENT ON WHOM NEXT SOVIET
AMBASSADOR TO CAIRO WOULD BE. HE SAID THAT ANSWER TO LATTER
POINT DEPENDED IN PART ON US/EGYPTIAN RELATIONS: IF THEY
CONTINUED TO IMPROVE, SOVIETS WOULD BE LESS INTERESTED IN
APPOINTING HIGH LEVEL FIGURE. AS FOR EGYPTIAN AMBASSADOR TO
SOVIET UNION, YEDRASHNIKOV SAID IT WAS "LOGICAL" TO
EXPECT THE APPOINTMENT OF HAFEZ ISMAIL. HE ADDED THAT
NO CHANGE WAS CONTEMPLATED IN SIZE OF SOVIET EMBASSY IN
CAIRO.

B. ARAB OIL EMBARGO. YEDRASHNIKOV SAID HE BELIEVED THAT
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AGREEMENT HAD BEEN REACHED TO LIFT EMBARGO. TO QUESTION

ABOUT WHETHER SOVIETS HAD ATTEMPTED IN RECENT WEEKS TO DISCOURAGE OIL PRODUCERS FROM LIFTING EMBARGO, YEDRASHNIKOV SAID THAT "IT MAY HAVE APPEARED THIS WAY" AND THAT, IN ANY CASE, USSR AND US WERE STILL COMPETING FOR INFLUENCE IN ME.

C. GENEVA NEGOTIATIONS. DESPITE FACT THAT USSR WAS STRONGLY INTERESTED IN MAINTAINING DIPLOMATIC POSITION BY ITS CO-CHAIRMANSHIP OF GENEVA, YEDRASHNIKOV SAID, IT WAS CLEAR THAT US HAD UPPER--PERHAPS EXCLUSIVE--HAND IN DEALING WITH PROBLEM; AND THAT GENEVA WAS THEREFORE A COVER BEHIND WHICH US COULD MANEUVER FREELY WITH EGYPTIANS, ISRAELIS AND SYRIANS.

D. FOXBATS. EMBOFF ASKED IF THERE WERE TRUTH TO RECENT AVIATION WEEK REPORT ABOUT FOXBATS IN EGYPT BEING PILOTED BY PAKISTANIS. YEDRASHNIKOV REDICULED THE IDEA, SAYING THAT SOVIETS CONTINUED TO PILOT FOXBATS ON FLIGHTS IN EGYPTIAN AIRSPACE. HE ADDED THAT SOME EGYPTIAN PILOTS HAD BEEN TRAINED INTO THESE AIRCRAFT BY USSR AND RETURNED TO EGYPT, BUT THEY HAD NOT YET FLOWN FROM EGYPTIAN AIRFIELDS.

E. EGYPTIAN CABINET RESHUFFLE. YEDRASHNIKOV SAID THAT IT APPEARED EGYPTIAN CABINET WOULD BE CHANGED IN ABOUT TEN DAYS, AND THAT NEXT PRIME MINISTER WOULD BE HEGAZY, RUMORS TO THE CONTRARY. HEGAZY, HE SAID, WOULD MAINTAIN EGYPT'S WESTWARD ORIENTATION, AND WAS THE MOST PLAUSIBLE CHOICE FOR A PRIME MINISTER WHOSE MAIN TASK WOULD BE TO EXTRACT AS MUCH FOREIGN ASSISTANCE AS POSSIBLE FROM THE WEST.

2. DURING THE CONVERSATION, YEDRASHNIKOV CONTINUED TO REFER TO SOVIET "DOWN" POSITION IN EGYPT AND CONCOMITANT US ASCENDANCY. HE SAID HE HAD COMMENTED MANY MONTHS AGO TO THE TASS HEAD OFFICE IN MOSCOW THAT SOVIET/EGYPTIAN RELATIONSHIP WOULD VARY INVERSELY WITH US/EGYPTIAN RELATIONSHIP, BUT HAD BEEN TOLD AT THE TIME THAT THIS WAS NOT A PUBLISHABLE REPORT. COMMENTING ON THE PRESENT STATE OF RELATIONS BETWEEN THE SOVIET COMMUNITY AND THE EGYPTIAN GOVERNMENT, YEDRASHNIKOV NOTED THAT SOVIET CITIZENS, INCLUDING EMPLOYEES OF THE SOVIET EMBASSY, WERE ENCOUNTERING GREATER DIFFICULTIES WITH EGYPTIAN OFFICIALS THAN HAD HERETOFORE BEEN THE CASE: ADMINISTRATIVE
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PROBLEMS FOR EXAMPLE, SEEMED TO BE HANDLED MORE SLOWLY, WITH GREATER ATTENTION TO DETAIL, AND WITH LESS SYMPATHY THAN BEFORE.
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